

More from Marich Pass

It takes no brains at all to realise that everyday life for the "average" worker in Marich is tough. I see it every time I visit, but a couple of things really hit home hard during my trip in March. I want to tell you about some of them.

One of the workers at Marich Pass Field Study Centre was taken ill at Christmas. It transpired eventually that he was suffering with meningitis. He is still alive, he did not lose any extremities, but very definitely this meningitis was around his brain....I cannot ever see him being again the man he was before.

He earns on average 200Ksh a day.

The bill for his treatment was 262,520 Ksh.

YES TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY TWO THOUSAND(PLUS).

He would need to work for approximately 3 yrs. 6 months to earn that money, and to pay this bill, he would not be able to spend anything on food, clothes....ANYTHING!

We (Friends From Marich Pass) assisted in paying this bill, and I also left a small amount for his continuing care, because good nourishing food is so important...but as he is unable to work where else would the money come from?????

Some of you may have experience of American hospital bills, where everything is charged. This is the same in Kenya. EVEN water for injections is charged...that came to 1,140Ksh.....(7 days wages?) Non sterile latex gloves = 500Ksh; syringes 1,400 Ksh and needles 500Ksh; bed charges =23,400Ksh and nursing care came to 15,700Ksh. *Frightening isn't it?*

I can't tell when crises like this are going to arise, and to help it meant diverting some of this year's money away from educational sponsorship but I had to do it.

In all of the years that I have been fundraising for my work in Kenya, I have only asked directly for money on a couple of occasions. Once was way back at the start of the whole thing when we had a sponsored event when I was still teaching, and the other time was last year at Erik's funeral. All the rest of the time I do MY bit by "events"....NORMALLY involving selling goods or food

related events like my Pancake party. But I am slowly realising that perhaps I OUGHT to take the bull by the horns and ask for direct contributions. Like many of the appeals on TV keep telling us even £3 a month goes a long way. So perhaps.....there are some of you out there who COULD help in this way. We have a safe English Bank account! I can give you details if you would like to help. I am not going to push this area but I appreciate any little help that can be given.

When the said worker was discharged from hospital, he was looked after for a while on site at Marich Field Study Centre, so that he was assured of good food, clean water, hygienic conditions and company. He has a sister who came to minister to him regularly. Eventually it was necessary for him to go to his "home". That is where I went to see him.

He has his own "house" in a family compound. A typical Pokot roundhouse....with NO windows! It was, in diameter, long enough to fit in a bed. By the door a small "fireplace" and that was all. What really really tugged at me was that he was LOCKED in; hence he had no light inside that house for most of the day. His sister met his needs in the morning and then had to go to "work"...or market whatever, trying to make money, and he was then locked in until she returned. (Calls of nature?) We discovered this only because my friend and driver had called out when we arrived and we heard him call back. He was SO thrilled to see us, and though a very sad shadow of himself he did recognise me and smiled and kept just saying "Thank you, thank you Mama Dhomorita". (I had taken him some supplies of maize, beans, sukuma,(a kind of spinach), sugar, salt, soap and cooking fat; but it was guaranteed that he would NOT get the UNIQUE benefit from it all.)

We had to lock him back in when we left and he cried, and I cried....buckets.

We decided that day that we would move him back to Marich Field Study Centre for another spell of rehabilitation, where, for a while, the other workers would at least be able to visit and give him the chance for some exercise. The money I left would therefore be wisely used for his stay.

Emotionally, it was not one of my best experiences in Kenya.

But as I keep reminding you, our MAIN aim is, and always has been, Educational projects. Fees, supplies, teacher's wages, buildings; and I wanted to compare some of these costs for the average Marich Pass worker, as I did with the medical costs.



A typical Pokot banda

Theoretically primary education (which goes up to approximately the age of 14) is free, but just as here in UK, MOST school require uniforms, then in addition MANY schools charge for lots and lots of extras and some of these extras can be hard to fathom; Transport costs when it is well known that the students have never had a "trip" in the whole of their time there; PTA fees when there is no evidence of ANYTHING the PTA has provided; and many many HAVE to charge for pencils and exercise books AND make them buy text books. In some schools this is because the government does NOT provide enough, and in other cases it is well known that the money given by the government has been "diverted" (and not usually into something for the school) So if you are earning 200Ksh a day and you have 3 or 4 children of school age (even primary), and **one** school dress or shorts and shirt costs on average about 400Ksh, what do you buy? Food for the family or school uniforms?



Paying your school fees with a goat!

THEN if you have survived the primary school system and you are clever enough to go on to secondary education, 99% of Secondary schools are boarding schools, and now they ramp up the charges!

1,000Ksh for PTA Bus maintenance; 5,000Ksh. for PTA Development; 2,000Ksh. for PTA teachers(this is when government does not supply enough teachers, the school employs extras, and the charges are incurred even if none are employed), 1,000Ksh for Motivation, 1,000Ksh. for Activity, and 24,000Ksh for boarding!!!!

These are ACTUAL fees charged by one school with which I have a "personal" connection, and are annual fees.

What we have been trying to do, in our plans in Marich, is to raise enough money to be able to run a school which does not need to charge parents for the "extras". In our Primary section, though we ARE a private school, our fees of

1,000Ksh, a term originally included EVERYTHING , even uniform!. Then we realised that in fact we were doing ourselves a disservice, to the extent that there were those who even thought that we should be providing a completely free service. It has caused us quite a lot of heartache, and we are having to rethink our approach, but whatever solution proves best, we will be doing it to best advantage the children.

Education fees are another way however where monthly/regular donations can help. And we would obviously welcome the idea of people sponsoring (in full or part) an individual , well deserving student. We WON'T waste our/your money on regular photos, and we won't subject the student to regular letter writing, and though you may know who you are sponsoring, **they** won't know who their sponsor is. WHY? So that you cannot be bombarded with requests for "more"



The end! (for today). *Judith.*